

SALMONELLOSIS (Salmonella)

What is Salmonellosis?

Salmonella are bacteria which cause an infection called salmonellosis in the stomach and intestines. About 2,000 types of *Salmonella* have been identified. However, only a small number of those types account for cases in Utah. Typhoid fever is the most serious type of *Salmonella* infection.

Who gets Salmonellosis?

Anyone can get salmonellosis, but it occurs more often in infants and young children.

How are *Salmonella* bacteria spread?

Salmonella bacteria are spread by eating or drinking infected food or water. It can also be spread by direct contact with an infected person or animal. Person-to-person spread often occurs in day-care centers and nursing homes where personal hygiene may be poor due to age or disabilities.

What are the symptoms of Salmonellosis?

People infected with *Salmonella* commonly have headache, stomach pain, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and almost always fever. Infections may enter the blood stream and be very serious in the very young or very old. Not all people infected with *Salmonella* will become sick. However, these people may excrete the bacteria and become a source of infection for others.

How soon after infection do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear within 6-72 hours after infection.

Where are *Salmonella* bacteria found?

Salmonella bacteria are commonly found in food products such as eggs, egg products, meats, meat products, poultry, unpasteurized milk, other unpasteurized dairy products, and cheese. Most domestic animals including chickens, cattle, pigs, ducks, dogs, and cats have been found to carry the bacteria. Recently, Utah as well as the rest of the U.S. has seen an increase in *Salmonella*

infection as the result of increased ownerships of exotic animal species such as reptiles.

How long can an infected person carry *Salmonella*?

The period of time a person may spread the infection can be several days to months. People who are given antibiotics may carry the bacteria for a longer time than others.

Do infectious people need to be excluded from work or school?

People with diarrhea (especially children in day-care and people who handle food) should not go to day-care, school or work. Most infected people may return when diarrhea stops if they carefully wash their hands after using the toilet. Food handlers should not handle food until they have submitted two negative stool cultures.

What is the treatment for Salmonellosis?

Most people recover on their own. However, small children, the elderly, and others with severe diarrhea should see a doctor.

How is Salmonellosis diagnosed?

Salmonellosis is diagnosed by laboratory examination of a stool sample. The laboratory work usually takes several days to complete and will indicate the type of *Salmonella* bacteria present.

How can Salmonellosis be prevented?

Some general guidelines are:

1. Always refrigerate meats and eggs.
2. Always cook meats completely. Never eat raw meat.
3. Always cook eggs and food containing raw eggs completely. **Never** eat dough or batter that contain raw eggs.
4. Avoid unpasteurized milk or foods made with unpasteurized milk.
5. Always wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after handling food, using the toilet, after changing diapers, or after playing with your pet.

Where can I get more information?

- Your personal doctor
- Your local health department, listed in your telephone directory
- The Utah Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology (801) 538-6191

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